



Testimony from AAA Northeast

Dear Committee Members,

As we look over the regional and national landscape we see that more and more states are considering, and legalizing, the use of recreational marijuana. AAA has significant concerns about the impact legalization will have on driving and traffic safety, and recommends that these measures be included in any legislation:

- Prohibit drivers from smoking, inhaling or ingesting cannabis while driving.
- Provide that Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) testimony be admissible and competent as evidence of OUI, and that a DRE may testify about the significance of symptoms of impairment.
- Allow courts to take judicial notice that THC can impair a person's ability to operate a motor vehicle.
- Direct traffic safety stakeholders to develop educational materials about DREs aimed at the judicial branch, which will help the courts understand why there is no simple test for drug impairment and thus why DRE evaluations are critical.
- Direct DOT and police agencies to create a DRE policy to ensure that there is sufficient availability of DREs throughout the state.
- Mandate and provide funding for all patrol officers who are not currently ARIDE-certified to complete ARIDE training prior to their next recertification. To qualify for the highly specialized DRE training, an officer must first complete Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE) training, an intermediate program that equips officers to recognize the physical and behavioral symptoms of drug impairment and helps them know when to request DRE assistance.
- Conduct regular public education campaigns about the risks of cannabis-impaired driving. In general, the American public perceives that drunk driving is dangerous, but does not see the same danger in drugged driving. Recent research from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that, compared with drunk driving, drivers are far more likely to believe that cannabis-impaired driving is not very dangerous or that people close to them would approve of cannabis-impaired driving.
- Require dispensaries to disseminate information on cannabis-impaired driving.

- Require education about cannabis-impaired driving in health classes. Young adults are especially likely to drive while impaired by cannabis, so education aimed at teens would be worthwhile. AAA's *Shifting Gears* program has already been presented to thousands of Rhode Island high school students, with surveys showing the program changes attitudes and behavior.
- Create a dedicated fund of cannabis-related revenue for traffic safety purposes.

In addition to the above considerations, and as the discussions about adult use of cannabis continues, AAA respectfully urges the inclusion of language that maintains pre-employment drug testing policies for those employed in certain safety-sensitive positions. Safety-sensitive employment drug testing will allow AAA to continue drug testing our emergency roadside technicians, which will ensure the safety of the public, our members, and our roadside assistance employees.

AAA recognizes that the legalization of recreational cannabis is a complex issue. Our position is specifically related to the unique challenges associated with combatting drug-impaired driving and the risk it poses to all road users. We would be happy to provide any additional resources that would help the committee in your deliberations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.